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Title:
Press statement - Royal Commission

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PRESS STATEMENT: 7/1/71.

EMBARGO: 6p.m. 7/1/71.

FROM: THE PREMIER (MR. DUNSTAN)

Pr.D. 1/71.

SUBJECT: ROYAL COMMISSION:

The Government of South Australia is opposed to Australia's continued involvement in the war in Vietnam, and the present National Service Act.

In its view the only proper way to achieve an Australian withdrawal from Vietnam is to obtain the support of the majority of citizens of the country for withdrawal.

The seven people who have refused to testify before the Commission make it clear that they are not concerned with obtaining the support of the majority of the citizens for a withdrawal, but rather consider that the only means of obtaining an "effectual" withdrawal is for a small minority group to adopt a determined campaign of civil disobedience.

One cannot imagine a course designed more effectively to alienate public support from the cause of withdrawal from Vietnam. However, in refusing to testify before the Commission the seven people concerned have indicated that this is the course they propose to follow, and have also explained in some measure the reasons for their actions in the particular matter being enquired into.

They add as a rider that some of them "may" have been willing to testify before the Commissioner if the Government had paid Counsel for them, and say that they applied for Counsel to the Government and the Law Society.

The only reason for their refusal of assistance by the Law Society there could have been was that they were in a position

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to pay for Counsel themselves according to the means test applied by the Society for legal assistance.

The Commissioner did not ask the Government to pay for Counsel as the seven dissenters suggest, but merely said that it would be of assistance to the Commission if they were represented by Counsel.

We are not yet in that happy state of society where there are sufficient public revenues to pay the legal costs of everyone who appears before a Court or Tribunal.

If Counsel at public expense were granted to the signatories of "The Advertiser" press release they would also have to be granted to every other person before the Commission who could claim a discernibly separate interest.

The rights of all parties before the Commission will I am sure be upheld by the Commissioner and by Counsel assisting him.

As to the political statement that the Government is making the Commission a sounding board for the "Establishment", I make this clear - The Government is here to govern in the interests of all the people of South Australia and to maintain the rights of all citizens. It does not intend that in the demonstration of the political beliefs of a few the rights of the remainder should be summarily disposed of.

The Government will always maintain the right of any person to express in a peaceful and orderly manner his views publicly, but it will also maintain the rule of law in the community.

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